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ABSTRACT

This report addresses current concerns in public education defined as being important to American Jews. Issues discussed include strategies for improving educational quality; the effects of funding disparities, tax credits and vouchers on public education; and the importance of integration and bilingual education in the public schools. Also reviewed are legal questions related to government funding of parochial schools, school prayer, censorship, and other church and State issues. The report concludes with policy recommendations and objectives for the improvement of public education. (JCD)

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Task Forces on the 80s

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PUBLIC EDUCATION

by Alan Gartner

UD 022 109

The American Jewish Committee

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This report is one of a series of publications issued by the American Jewish Committee during its Seventy-Fifth Anniversary Year -- a Diamond Jubilee celebration marking three quarters of a century dedicated to safeguarding civil and religious rights of Jews here and abroad, and helping to advance the human rights and fundamental freedoms of men and women of all races, creeds and nationalities the world over.

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Dedicated to the memory of Gerard Weinstock who, as Chairperson of the Task Forces on the 80s, inspired this project with his enthusiasm and wisdom.

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PREFACE

The Task Forces on the 80s are, in a sense, a continuation of an undertaking that began more than a decade ago, when the AJC initiated a series of policy-planning studies on issues that were likely to affect American Jews, directly or as part of the larger society, in the 1970s. The purpose of the project was to provide guidance to the Jewish community and, more specifically, to the Committee itself, in long-range planning and programming for the decade ahead. The published reports provoked wide discussion, and their recommendations led to a number of new approaches to such issues as affirmative action, coalition building, Jewish education, outreach to the unaffiliated, and the impact of demographic changes on communal policy.*

With the advent of the 1980s -- and the AJC's 75th Anniversary -- the time seemed ripe for a similar undertaking, informed by past experience and responsive to new and emerging trends and conditions. AJC's Task Forces on the 1980s set out to examine the major issues likely to appear on the American public policy agenda, and to evaluate the Jewish interest in those issues, the available policy options and possible courses of action.

The problems delineated in the 1970s Task Force on The Future of the Jewish Community in America provided useful guideposts for addressing our internal Jewish communal concerns. And although we recognized that international concerns -- the security of Israel, the well-being of Jews in troubled lands, the enhancement of human rights everywhere -- were likely to continue occupying a great deal of the Jewish community's attention in the years ahead, most of the historians, sociologists, and civic and religious leaders we consulted recommended that we concentrate on the major issues in American civic life. The social-policy issues that confront American society are, in many respects, particularly perplexing for American Jews. Are there specific Jewish interests with respect to public education, family policy, the political process, urban-suburban problems, U.S. defense posture and group status in America?

Six Task Forces were created to consider these broad issues, each of them made up, in addition to AJC leaders and staff, of individuals with special expertise in the subject, and a principal author who was asked to prepare a thoughtful paper, guided by the discussions raised at the Task-Force sessions, but based principally on his or her personal views.

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*Three reports were published: Group Life in America, which dealt with intergroup relations; The Future of the Jewish Community in America, which concentrated on the internal Jewish agenda; and The World of the 1970s, which considered the problems of Jews in Israel and other lands.

None of the resulting papers is a consensus document. Each represents the views of the principal author, without necessarily reflecting the views of the other Task-Force members or of the American Jewish Committee. However, the members of each Task Force were invited to review the paper dealing with their subject areas and, if they wished, to submit brief additional or dissenting comments, all of which are included with the principal document.

It is our hope that these papers and comments -- the products of several months' labor by knowledgeable leaders and experts -- will stimulate wide-ranging discussion, policy review and new program planning in the Jewish community. The American Jewish Committee will be giving the issues raised in these pages a high priority both nationally and in its chapters in the months ahead.

Bertram H. Gold
Executive Vice President

INTRODUCTION

No feature of American life is more central to the interests of Jews and other minorities than its dedication to an open, pluralistic society, where variety is welcomed, conformity spurned and individuality recognized and cherished. It is the processes and institutional forms that support this goal that mitigate intergroup conflicts and tensions and help to fulfill the mandate of Tikun Olam -- "the just ordering of human society and the world" -- and that provide the political and social safeguards so essential to a group that numbers less than three percent of the country's total population.

Among these processes and institutions, few have more consequence or potential than universal, mandatory public education. Notwithstanding the questions Colin Greer and others have correctly raised about the more idyllic versions of education's history, it was public education that made possible the extraordinary economic and social advances achieved by American Jews in the 20th century.

What, then, is the status of public education in the United States today, and what is its future? It is always tempting, at the beginning of a new decade, especially when there is a new national Administration, to talk of change and new developments over the past ten years. Such neat decennial divisions are, of course, quite artificial; nevertheless, they provide a useful reference point for facts about public education in the United States today.

The most recent report of the National Center for Educational Statistics[1] includes among its voluminous data certain basic figures particularly worth noting:

- - Public school enrollment dropped by some ten percent in the 1970s, from 45.9 million children in 1970 to 41.9 in 1979. The total is projected to fall below forty million in 1985 and then to begin a slight increase.

- - The number of public-school teachers increased slightly during the 1970s (from 2.0 million in 1970 to an estimated 2.1 million in 1980) and, because of the drop in student enrollment, pupil-teacher ratios declined significantly (from 24.4 in 1970 to an estimated 20.7 in 1980, at the elementary level).

- - Non-public school enrollment, about which the data are sparse and not very reliable, dropped by about the same percentage, from 5.4 million in 1970 to 5.0 in 1979. Most of that decrease came in the first half of the decade, and there has been, perhaps, a slight increase since 1975. It is

estimated that this enrollment will remain relatively stable for the next decade, thus representing a greater percentage of the total enrollment.*

- - While nationally there has been a drop in the percentage of Black students attending schools with 90 percent or greater minority enrollment, the rather sharp declines in the South (from more than a third to less than a quarter) were accompanied by gradual increases in the North (from a bit more than half to over 60 percent).

- - Measured as a percentage of students in schools with 90 percent or greater minority enrollment, racial isolation of Hispanic students has slowly increased.

- - After a decade of steadily declining Gallup Poll ratings for public education, there was a small shift upward in 1980, when 35 percent of the respondents gave the schools an "A" or "B" grade, and 18 percent a "D" or "Fail." In contrast, a third of northern Black respondents gave public schools a "D" or "Fail" rating.

- - Of all the government activities cited in the 1980 Gallup Poll, respondents reported greatest public confidence in the public schools. Twenty-eight percent said they had a "great deal" of confidence compared with a range from 14 to 19 percent who expressed a "great deal" of confidence in the national, state, and local governments and the courts. Conversely, 20 percent voiced "very little" confidence in the public schools, and a range of 24 to 31 percent expressed "very little" confidence in the other four institutions.

- - In 1970, respondents cited "Finances," "Integration/Segregation," and "Discipline" as the three biggest problems of the public schools in their community (23, 21 and 14 percent, respectively); in 1980, the three major concerns were "Lack of Discipline," "Use of Dope/Drugs," and "Poor curriculum/poor standards" (26, 14, and 11 percent, respectively).

*There is a sharp variation in private school enrollment according to race, area, and grade level. In 1977, among whites at the elementary level, it ranged from 22.3 percent in metropolitan areas' central cities to 7.6 percent in non-metropolitan areas; the same pattern, at a lower level, was true at the secondary level. Among Blacks, the range at the elementary level was from 7.9 percent in metropolitan areas' central cities to 0.7 percent in non-metropolitan areas; at the secondary level, the range was from 4.7 percent in metropolitan areas outside central cities to 0.3 in non-metropolitan areas.

ISSUES FOR THE 80s

The problems confronting public education have been pinpointed and commented upon again and again in recent years, and the list of concerns is a long and varied one. For example:

- - Nearly a decade ago, David Cohen, as part of an AJC study of probable trends and developments in the 1970s (Group Life in America, 1972), organized his report around seven topics: intellectuals and social protest on the Left; education, integration, and Black upward mobility; "The Culture of Poverty," an attack on the slums; busing; community control of schools, public support for private education; and financing higher education.

- - A 1979 AJC staff paper identifying major issues in education listed quality education, cost of education, race, censorship, and funds for non-public schools.

- - The annual Gallup Poll of Attitudes Toward Education covers more than a score of "major problems" confronting the public schools.

- - The Heritage Foundation's education prescriptions for the new Administration include the abolition of the Department of Education, a reduction in Federal regulatory activities for education, block grants to local school districts, tuition tax credits to increase competition among schools (but not voucher plans, since these are likely to increase Federal regulatory involvement), and the eventual elimination of Federal funding for education.

- - A survey of Washington-based education-association leaders by Phi Delta Kappa (November 1980) cited lack of money, "big brotherism" by the new Department and the need for commitment to high quality education as the most important issues facing American education in the 1980-81 school year.

- - Writing in Education Times (October 13, 1980), Institute for Educational Leadership Director Samuel Halperin identified a dozen issues of overriding importance, including the quality of high schools, demographic changes, a new vocationalism, grants consolidation, the Federal role in education, increased concern with local impact-analysis, coordinated social services, collective bargaining, testing and accountability, leadership and performance, and the need for public support.

- - Chester E. Finn, Jr., writing in Change (September, 1980), focuses on the souring of the "liberal consensus," which he says has shaped national educational policy for the past 15 years. He cites as the major goals and

principles of that consensus an end to involuntary segregation of every kind, the equalizing of educational opportunity, and the production and dissemination of knowledge. He is concerned about what he perceives to be a radically different agenda, beguiling in its resemblance to the old liberal consensus, which includes a call for "colorblindness instead of quotas as the symbol of equal opportunity, aid for those who need it rather than for all who want it, a premium on excellence and achievement, a minimum of government interference, and a maximum of individual and family choice."

- - Challenging the claimed success of the 1960s and 1970s, the attorney and children's advocate, Marian Wright Edelman, in A Portrait of Inequality, published by The Children's Defense Fund which she directs, points to the continuing failure of public policies to address the needs of disadvantaged Black children and opposes proposals to reduce funding, consolidate programs, or diminish concern for issues of equity.

Without addressing each of the issues cited above, the pages that follow will focus on four issues that are of grave importance to the future of American education as a whole:

- - the quality of education and how it might be improved;

- - the funding of education, and particularly the distribution of costs and resources;

- - the role of race, culture, and ethnicity in the educational process;

- - the increasing demands placed on schools in contemporary society.

All four are of particular interest to American Jews.

For the sake of brevity, this discussion will concentrate on elementary and secondary education since, despite elements and problems that are unique to different levels of schooling, the major issues involved are also pertinent to higher education.

The Quality of Education

The quality of the education provided to the overwhelming majority of American youth is important not only for itself, but also for its effects upon other issues of national concern. Furthermore, the public's willingness to support public education, both politically and financially, is directly related to how good a job the schools are believed to be doing.

The data as to quality are complicated and complex; but whatever the standards applied, it seems clear that, overall, the quality of education is lower than it was a decade ago[2], even though, on some measures, there appears to be a slight improvement in the past few years.[3] For more than a decade, researchers (and political figures) have stressed pupil and (sometimes teacher) characteristics, and

their impact on school success (or, more often, failure). Increasingly, however, there are data[4] which show that schools can and do work, and that the behavior of school personnel and children, rather than their backgrounds, are (and should be) the primary matters of attention. In fact, a major impetus of these studies was to challenge, or at least to offer an alternative to, the work of Coleman, Jencks, and others who found that the low achievement of poor children could be accounted for largely by their inherent characteristics.

In Crisis in the Classroom (1970), Charles Silberman reported on three Harlem schools where student achievement was high. In 1971, Weber published a study of four inner-city schools that were successfully teaching poor children to read.[5] All those schools were marked by strong leadership, an orderly and quiet atmosphere, high expectations for all the students, strong emphasis on reading skills, and careful and frequent evaluation of pupil progress.

Weber's major findings were confirmed by a study published by the New York State Education Department's Office of Education Program Review.[6] The study compared two New York City schools with analogous, largely poor, student populations. In one, the students achieved well; in the other, they didn't. The differences in student performance seemed to be attributable to factors within the school's control. At the school where children were successful, there was a greater focus on reading, and both teachers and administrators were less skeptical about their ability to teach the children and less likely to blame reading problems on outside factors.

A more elaborate California study examined 21 pairs of elementary schools, each pair with similar pupil populations but considerably differing performance records on standardized reading tests.[7] Again, the institutional factors seemed to be most responsible for the achievement differences. The schools whose pupils performed better showed more principal support, greater teacher effort, more orderly and task-oriented classrooms and more time spent on classroom subjects. There were more support services, teacher aides were limited to non-instructional tasks, and there was greater teacher satisfaction.

The Michigan State Education Department has been analyzing factors affecting school effectiveness for a number of years. In the most comprehensive of these studies, Brookover and Lezotte compared schools with declining and improving pupil performance[8] and found, like the New York and California studies, that in the improving schools the staff placed greater emphasis on basic reading and mathematic skills, were convinced that all of their students could master these skills and felt that they had the ability and the responsibilty to help them do so.

For the past decade, Ron Edmonds and a number of colleagues have been studying factors accounting for school effectiveness. Based on work in Michigan and New York City, they pinpoint three primary factors: effective schools have personnel committed to reaching and teaching all pupils, strong administrative leadership, and frequent and careful monitoring of pupil programs.

In Philadelphia, the school system and the Federal Reserve Bank joined in an effort to identify "what works in reading."[9] The researchers studied fourth-grade students and found that pupils who read well were more likely to have attended

kindergarten before starting first grade, to have a good attendance record, and to have been exposed to certain specific instructional techniques. They also were more likely to have principals who were experienced in reading education and made frequent classroom observations, and teachers who had few absences and more than one year of experience at the fourth grade. The researchers also pinpointed factors which did not affect pupil achievement. These included whether the pupil came from a lower or higher income neighborhood, whether the school had more or fewer low-income pupils, and the race of the teacher.

Finally, the Phi Delta Kappa Study of Exceptional Urban Elementary Schools, which analyzed case literature, research literature, and expert opinion, identified five sets of factors associated with school or program success: leadership (including style and expectations), teaching personnel (including the amount of in-service training and adult/child ratios), special-project funding, curriculum and instruction (including emphases on reading and math, structured learning environments and individualized instruction), and community resources (including parental contact and involvement in school activities).

What all this means is that the variables that affect the quality of education have to do with what administrators, teachers, and students do, not who they are. As Tomlinson writes:

> We should take comfort from the emerging evidence: It signifies a condition we can alter. The common thread of meaning in all that research has disclosed tells us that academically effective schools are "merely" schools organized on behalf of the consistent and undeviating pursuit of learning. The parties to the enterprise -- principals, teachers, parents, and students -- coalesce on the purpose, justification, and methods of schooling. Their common energies are spent on teaching and learning in a systematic fashion. They are serious about, even dedicated to, the proposition that children can and shall learn in school.[10]

This is encouraging news. It shows that schools can be and have been effective; that with will and skill -- and not vast sums of new money or major pedagogic breakthroughs -- the quality of education can be raised for all children, and that we need not sacrifice the education of some in order to achieve the education of many.

The Funding of Education

The costs of education are significant. In 1978, they totalled $80.9 billion, a 21 percent increase, in constant dollars, over 1970. Not only the dollar total but also the distribution among governmental sectors has changed in the past decade.

	1970	1978
Federal	8.0	8.1
State	39.9	44.1
Local	52.1	47.8

In addition to overall costs, it is important to consider other funding factors that have, or could have, a vital impact on public education: the disparities in state and intra-state funding and the proposals for tuition credits and tuition vouchers.

Funding Disparities: There is a wide variance in the amount of money that different states spend or make available for education, whether measured as expenditures per student, or as a percentage of per capita income. But it is the disparity within the states which has received most attention, particularly since Serrano v. Priest (1971).

Every state except Hawaii, where schools receive no local funds, has a sizeable disparity in school funding; and only 28 states have reduced disparities between "rich" and "poor" school districts in the years between 1970 and 1977. Further efforts toward equalization are threatened by general inflation, growing restrictions on state tax collection and expenditures (from "Proposition 13" in California to "Proposition 2½" in Massachusetts), and by resistance from communities likely to suffer by such moves. The American Jewish Committee, in 1973, adopted a "Statement on Equalizing School Finance" which called for "leveling up" rather than "leveling down" as the basic principle of such a change. Such proposals, while desirable and conceptually sound, run counter to the economic pressures on state budgets and the reluctance of many political leaders to champion increased educational expenditures. Indeed, the current level of support is severely threatened by the widespread thrust for state and national tax cuts. Those engaged in the search for alternatives to a property-tax base for funding education would do well to concentrate on the overall level of support and on equalization at the same time.

Tax Credits and Vouchers: Even more pressing than funding equalization and levels of support is the question of tuition tax credits and education vouchers. Debate on this subject has centered on two issues -- the constitutionality of support for religiously-affiliated schools, and the consequence of such support for the public schools. While there are differences between tax credits and vouchers, both in general concept and in their potential effects, they can be considered together in terms of their impact on public education.

Current voucher proposals date back to efforts by the Federal Office of Economic Opportunity, in the late 1960s, to promote increased parental influence over their children's education. The conceptual model was that of the free market, which presumes that buyers can influence the product or service available. While an OEO-supported experiment with tuition vouchers at Alum Rock produced mixed results, such plans continue to be proposed as a solution to public education ills, primarily by J.E. Coons and A.D. Sugarman, whose proposed "Initiative for Family Choice" suggested providing families with vouchers they could use to pay the costs of education.[11] (Efforts to place the proposal on the California ballot in 1980 failed when proponents were unable to collect enough signatures.)

More recently greater attention has been paid to proposals for tuition tax credits or deductions. In 1978, the House of Representatives passed (but the Senate rejected) a bill providing tax credits for students attending private and parochial schools. (During the Congressional debate, distinctions were drawn between tax credits for attendance at private or parochial elementary and high schools and attendance at such colleges and universities, and mechanisms were proposed for

extending the benefits to those who do not earn enough to pay taxes.) The 1980 Republican Party platform endorsed tax credits, and 22 of the Senators who voted against them in 1978 are no longer in the Senate (nor are 13 of those who voted for them.)[12] Senators Robert Packwood (R. Ore.) and Daniel Patrick Moynihan (D. N.Y.), the initiators of the earlier bill, have introduced a similar bill in the present Congress.

Some proponents of tax credits, including Thomas Sowell, have argued that they would help Blacks and other low-income persons. Other supporters feel they would encourage the expansion of private Jewish and other religious educational institutions. But besides presenting serious church-state issues, discussed below, tax credits are regressive in impact (though some proposals have been made to reduce this bias), and are likely to have harmful effects on the public school system.*

The most serious danger lies in two virtually inevitable effects of tuition tax credits on the public schools: they will drain funds from public education;** and they will lure from the public schools just those active and concerned families whose presence is most vital to the strengthening of public education,[13] leaving families least able to cope to schools less and less able to help them do so.

Proponents of tax credits insist that tuition vouchers and/or tax credits would strengthen public education by subjecting it to healthy competition; there is no evidence to bear them out. Were that true, one might expect communities with a sizeable percentage of non-public schools to have more effective public schools; but this is hardly the case. And if one looks at an analogous situation, the health arena, where Medicare and Medicaid payments are equivalent to tax credits or vouchers, in that they give patients alternatives to being treated in public clinics, one finds, rather than improved care and beneficial competition, a proliferation of "Medicare mills" that might well serve as precedents for shoddy tax-credit schools. Furthermore, as The New York Times notes, " ... the fastest growing private institutions are motivated by opposition to desegregation and other questionable political goals."[14] And Congressional instructions to the IRS not to interfere with the tax status of private and parochial schools make it easier to use tax credits as a means of perpetuating segregation.

On the other hand, there is no reason that the public schools cannot offer a diversity of educational approaches -- if they are given the funds and public support to do so.

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*Proposed tax credit bills state that such credits are not to be considered Federal aid to education, thus exempting private schools from Federal civil-rights standards. Nor are there any income limits on eligibility for the credit. There is also the likely (and appropriate) pressure for state regulation as the price of government funding. In State v. Faith Baptist Church, the Nebraska Supreme Court upheld state requirements for teacher certification, minimum curricula, and compulsory attendance at parochial schools.

**While the initial costs may be low, it is instructive to note that between 1978 and 1980 the cost to the Federal Government of college loans under the Middle Income Students Assistance Act soared from $300 million to nearly $2 billion.

At the same time that the 97th Congress debates tax credits (whose estimated costs range from $4 to $6 billion) it will be considering the overall costs of education and the direction of Federal support. The likelihood is that any sums expended through vouchers or credits will be deducted from other Federal educational allocations. And the Administration is proposing both reduction of Federal funding and block grants to the states. Experience has taught us that greater local discretion in the spending of federally provided monies usually translates into giving less to the most needy.[15]

A recent New York Times editorial, "Abandoning Public Education," sums up the issue succinctly:

> The losers if Congress enacted either proposal [voucher] or tax credit would be the inner-city children...
>
> Non-public schools would skim off the best public school pupils, rejecting those too troublesome or too costly to teach. Regulations forcing private and parochial schools to accept them would meet fierce resistance. Thus the public schools would be left with the children who need help most and with the parents who can do the least politically and in other ways.[16]

Race, Culture and Ethnicity

It is not surprising that the issues which most vex the domestic life should also be central to public education. While matters of race, culture and ethnicity affect many aspects of school curriculum and environment, the two issues of greatest concern here are integration and bilingual education.

In considering the question of integration, it is necessary to focus not only on specific programs and the apparent pupil-learning gains or losses resulting from them, but on the essential goals of American society. When the U.S. Supreme Court, in Brown v. Board of Education, found that separate was inherently unequal, its judgment was predicated on the place of Blacks in American society and on their self-perceptions and the perception of others toward them. In this context it is a mistake to measure the effects of desegregation by short-term achievement scores, since the measure of success in this regard is, first and foremost, the extent to which racial isolation is reduced. Of course, it is important, in achieving this goal, to avoid a negative impact on the learning of any group of students. And while the evidence on this subject is mixed, and is most often presented so as to support a position rather than to illuminate a problem, it can be documented that, on balance, nationwide school integration has successfully reduced racial isolation without negatively affecting achievement.

In any case, the question is not what the results have been in the quarter of a century since Brown, but what our national policies -- and the policies of the Jewish community -- should be in the future. Given the Jewish community's commitment to a pluralistic society as being in the best interests of both Jews and the larger society, the position taken by the American Jewish Committee nearly 20 years ago warrants equal support today.

> Civic competence requires the ability to understand, work with and live with people of diverse religions, races, and ethnic origins. The school should therefore provide intergroup education and, as much as possible, the actual experience of being part of a heterogeneous school body.
>
> A Board of Education alone cannot correct the absence of diversity, but neither can it hold itself free of the obligation to make the school system and educational arrangements as democratic as possible.[17]

Within such a policy framework, the important issue, then, is not "whether" but "how." Here a number of criteria ought to affect decision-making, including a concern for the quality of education, and the desire to keep disruption and waste of time to a minimum in pupils' lives. Certainly there is need to avoid the implication that Black children require white classmates in order to learn; rather, the position must be that all children can benefit from a significant reduction of racial isolation.

What is true for students also holds true for school staff. It is beneficial to both white and minority-group pupils to see minority-group persons in responsible roles, as both teachers and administrators. And, it is beneficial to both groups of students and staff if the criteria for selecting personnel are job-related. (One would think that a test such as that previously used by the New York City Board of Examiners to select assistant principals, which included multiple-choice questions involving the number of spaces remaining on a typewriter line when the bell rang, would be recognized by everyone as both foolish and not in children's best interests.)

Of course, in the effort to increase the number of minority staff and to distribute them in some reasonable proportion throughout the system, some methods, such as more intensive recruitment, are unobjectionable and others, such as New York City's use of Black and white boxes are offensive.* The need is to devise ways to achieve the desired outcome without violating true standards of merit -- possibly by establishing a pool of qualified applicants and then selecting from that pool without ranking. Court-ordered staff integration has been an appropriate remedy when voluntary efforts fail.

Bilingual Education

A 1979 paper prepared by the staff of the American Jewish Committee pointed out: "The issue of bilingual education poses fundamental questions about

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*To implement an agreement with the Office of Civil Rights, the New York City Board of Education divided newly hired teachers by race and had them draw placement assignments from separate boxes. Chauvinism, parochialism, and ease of access to information account in part for the special attention paid to New York City in this paper. There is an additional reason, however. The New York City public schools serve more Jewish students than any other public school system, and a significant percentage of all Jewish children in public schools. Exact data as to the enrollment of Jewish students in various public schools are lacking; while this absence is vexing, collection of such data would, I believe, be worse.

both the goals of public school in America and the nature of diversity in our society."[18] The issue is a Jewish concern not only because minority groups with whom Jews work closely on many mutual problems feel strongly about the subject, but also because it is in states with substantial Jewish populations (New York, California, Florida, Illinois, and New Jersey), along with four southwestern states, that 90 percent of those whose native language is not English live.

Again, it is not the purpose here to address the particulars of pedagogic practice (indeed, it is quite appropriate to object to Federal regulations that seek to dictate details of practice). But it is pertinent to discuss the basic principles of bilingual education, which include both fluency in English and respect for children's language and culture. Certainly, it is the goal of public education in the U.S. to teach every child to be fluent in oral and written English. At the same time, in addressing the learning needs of any child, it is best to start at the point where the child is, and both respect for the child and good pedagogic practice argue for honoring the child's cultural background, including its language.

For a great many reasons, including personal enrichment and U.S. foreign relations, it is an advantage for students to be fluent in languages other than English. Such fluency should therefore be viewed as an asset rather than an impediment, and the school should encourage admiration for children who speak other languages.

It goes without saying, of course, that any school activity requires competent personnel and rigorous evaluation both as to the program and the children's learning progress.

Church and State Issues in Education

Traditional church-state issues, such as aid to parochial schools, prayer, religious observances and the posting or distribution of religious materials in public schools, continue to be of concern to Jews and other Americans who believe that separation of church and state is an essential element of democracy. The subject has taken on a new urgency with the growth in the political power of the "New Right," which has forged an alliance between political conservatism and religious fundamentalism. As J.C. Park notes: "The evidence reflects with startling clarity that right-wing interests have found the public schools a convenient target for unifying ultraconservative ideology and traditional morality for political gain."[19]

It is important, however, not to assume that all conservatives or religious fundamentalists would endorse censorship, bar homosexuals as teachers or oppose values-education or sex education on religious or moral grounds. While backers of each of these positions frequently agree on the others as well, there are those who feel strongly about one issue or another without supporting the whole package.

The question of tuition tax credits and vouchers, discussed earlier as an aspect of school financing and support of the public schools, is also an important church-state issue. As the opponents of such credits have argued, "the cases are in one of the grayest areas of constitutional law."[20] A recent Supreme Court decision, Pearl v. Regan and a subsequent decision of the District Court for the Second Circuit, Pearl v. Harris, both rejected challenges to support programs for specific

educational services in non-public schools. The first case involved a New York statute that provides for reimbursing non-public schools for various testing and reporting services mandated by state law; the second concerned a Title I, ESEA provision allocating funds for the remedial education of parochial students by public-school teachers, on the premises of the non-public schools, during regular school hours. Both decisions were narrowly drawn, and in the Regan decision the court was split, 5-4.

More to the point are three cases involving state tuition tax credits. In Minnesota, the American Civil Liberties Union challenged a law allowing parents to deduct up to $700 for specified non-religious expenses at public or non-public schools.[21] The court upheld the law, noting that it applied equally to students attending public and non-public schools, and that the deduction was available only for non-religious expenses.

In 1973, the Supreme Court declared invalid a New York state law which provided tax relief for tuition paid by parents of non-public school children.[22]

In 1979, the District Court for New Jersey overturned a state law which permitted parents of children attending non-public schools to deduct $1,000 from their income tax.[23] Unlike Roemer, the New Jersey statute applied only to non-public school students and did not exclude religious expenses. The Supreme Court ultimately affirmed the decision.

The exact shape of Federal tax-credit legislation is still unclear, but there is little doubt that such proposals pose a danger to the traditional safeguards of the Establishment Clause.

The question of school prayers continues to surface despite the fact that the U.S. Supreme Court, in Engel v. Vitale, declared the practice unconstitutional in 1962. During the last months of 1980, the Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit upheld the refusal of a local Board of Education to grant a group of students permission to hold voluntary prayer meeting in a classroom. At the same time, a District Court judge in Louisiana upheld a state law allowing a daily prayer period in public schools, and in Texas, a District Court judge upheld a Lubbock school-system ruling permitting the Fellowship of Christian Athletes to meet in school buildings. In several states school football teams begin games with prayer despite rulings by their Attorneys General that such practices are unconstitutional. Perhaps the most serious development is Senator Jesse Helms' proposal that the Federal Courts be barred from hearing challenges to "voluntary" prayer in the schools.

Two states, North Dakota and Kentucky, enacted laws requiring the posting of the Ten Commandments in public-school classrooms; both laws were struck down as violations of the Establishment Clause -- the North Dakota case by the District Court,[24] the Kentucky case by the U.S. Supreme Court.[25]

In November 1980, the same month that it overturned the Kentucky statute, the Supreme Court let stand an Eighth Circuit Court decision upholding a Sioux Falls (S.D.) tradition of celebrating Christmas and other religious holidays in the public schools.[26]

And in a case involving the way in which school practices affect a pupil's freedom of religious observance, the Virginia Supreme Court affirmed a lower court decision dismissing the request of two observant Jews that the high-school graduation be held on a day other than Saturday.[27]

Censorship of school and library books is another effort that has occupied the energies of many conservative and Fundamentalist religious groups since the mid-1970s. The Heritage Foundation, which has lately gained prominence as advisors to the Reagan Administration, provided legal counsel some years back for censorship efforts of a Kanawha (W. Va.) group unhappy with certain textbooks, and lobbied against a social-studies curriculum that it disapproved of.

Former Representative Robert E. Bauman (R. Md.) has summarized what he felt should be the goals and actions of a conservative Administration with regard to education: The Government, he feels, should:

- - Direct research and discretionary funds to support statewide voucher systems for public and private schools alike.

- - Fund mostly basic education programs.

- - Fund programs in free-enterprise education, perhaps administered by local chambers of commerce.

- - Fund the revival of old-fashioned track systems.

- - Finance the development of high-discipline schools for problem students, administered with corporal punishment instead of social workers.

- - Deny all Federal funds to any school district that forces teachers to join a union against their will, discriminates against teachers through quota systems for hiring, refuses to cooperate with welfare authorities in tracking down runaway fathers, violates parental rights by denying public screening of teaching materials, as in sex education courses.

One day, Bauman says, funds will be denied to schools that violate the separation of church and state by indoctrinating students with the religion of secular humanism, and to schools that violate student rights by forbidding voluntary prayer in classrooms.[28]

Fred Hechinger, The New York Times education editor, in an article about prayer in schools, articulated a position appropriate to the entire range of church-state issues:

> Surrendering to political pressure by letting prayer into state-schools exposes children to hostility if they stand apart from the religious majority. The absence of religion from these schools serves the interests of all religions -- except, of course, any that would use the schools to take advantage of the others.[29]

CONCLUSION

Thus far we have been discussing education and schooling as if the two were synonomous; but, of course, they are not. Education takes place in many places other than school; indeed, more education takes place within the family, among friends and peers, in the community, at work, in religious and cultural institutions, than it does at school. Recognition of this fact is not to denigrate the school, but to place schooling in context, to understand the particular role it occupies in the larger society, and to appreciate the interplay between social change and the schools.

Public education developed in a largely rural America. Today it suffers from confusion between what society expects the schools to accomplish and what they can really do. That is not to say that schools bear no responsibilities beyond their walls, or beyond "the basics." But it must be stressed that schools operate within a context, and that they are, at one and the same time, victims, reflections, and (least of all) causes of the conditions in the larger society.

Contemporary America is a society of increasing cynicism about the worth and the effectiveness of major institutions, both public and private, of reduced economic growth and grave doubts about the future, of ongoing racism and sexism, high unemployment (differentiated by race and sex), rising crime and violence, and unprecedented changes in the traditional roles of women, men and the family. The public schools often attribute their failures to these factors, but they have yet to come to grips with them or to institute major changes in policies or practices to accommodate them.

Schools today, as in the past, are asked both to reflect and shape societal values. But because we live in a society where values are in conflict, it is impossible for the school to satisfy all our demands -- particularly, as is often the case, when parents demand that the school inculcate values which they themselves no longer live up to.

Yet there can be little doubt that education and schooling are, and will be, of increasing importance in our complex society. Literacy remains essential despite the infatuation with new technology, and so does the ability to deal with harder, more complex problems and to tolerate uncertainty and ambiguity. The schools will serve neither the Jewish interest nor the larger American interest if they fail to provide high-quality education -- basic skills and beyond -- to all the children.

To do so, school systems need both financial and human resources. I am convinced that tuition tax credits (or vouchers) will deprive the public schools of both needed funds and the equally urgent involvement of concerned parents and citizens, and will make it more difficult for the public schools to keep good teachers and administrators.[30]

Increasing options for women elsewhere may well have already drained some of the most able teachers from the schools; but other factors threaten the quality of teaching, including inadequacies of professional preparation, the lowered prestige of the field, a relative decline in income, and operational problems ranging from increased violence to lack of effective management. While not the whole answer to school quality, by any means, effective support, financial and human, are essential, and any drain of those resources must be opposed. The challenge is how to achieve community support and high quality when each is so dependent on the other.

It is also important to oppose efforts to turn the schools into instruments of orthodoxy. Jews and all concerned Americans must resist the temptation to blame the schools for society's ills and to deal with these ills by injecting religion and particularistic morality into the schools.

This does not mean that schools should be value-free; education that purports to be value-free is, in fact, fraudulent and valueless. There are several valid ways in which schools can and do "teach" values. There are, first of all, the values that are expressly taught -- the importance of learning, a tolerance for dissent, cooperation and caring, the benefits of hard work.

Even more important are the values expressed in the way the schools operate -- with fairness to each child, with high expectations and standards for all children, with willing assistance to help each child attain those standards, and with respect for all students and staff.

At present there is considerable debate as to where educational power belongs.* In recent years the Federal Government has, for the most part, intervened to rectify inequality and mistreatment, although some of its remedies have been foolish. The issue, however, is less where power is exercised than the principles by which it is applied, particularly now that the promise of universal public education is finally becoming a reality.

The American Jewish Committee's Director of Education, Marilyn Braveman, summarizing the Committee's position in this area, wrote that the AJC "has worked for increased financial support for public schools and for high-quality public education, which includes good intergroup relations and the recognition of the diverse needs and culture of our pluralistic society." In the same paper, Ms. Braveman stressed that the need and obligation to support public education is not reduced because some parents select private education for their children. Private

*This paper was completed as the Reagan Administration came to office. While their proposals -- block grants, funding cuts, repeal of legislation such as the Education of All Handicapped Children Act, support for tuition tax credits, weakening of support for affirmative action and the tools of integration -- present education with serious and potentially devastating consequences, it seemed inappropriate (as both partisan and subject to being out of date) in a paper such as this to focus on these developments.

schools must be available to those who want them and are willing to support them* but for the overwhelming majority of America's children, it is the public schools that "give the child ... a cross-section of what society is all about and give them the opportunity to work within the real world."[31] Of course, there are many "real" worlds [and] many places to learn about them; but for most children the public school is a central, if not always pleasant, place to discover it.

Nor is it mere attendance in the public school that is important. It is the effort made there to help mold children, as the AJC's Irving M. Levine explains, "into 'pluralistic personalities' with both an appreciation of their own self-worth and heritage, and a curiosity, excitement and affection for their neighbors' similarities and differences."[32] Again, the public school is not the only place to do this, but it does offer a forum where it can be done, and where it can affect the most children.

In sum, we need to go beyond both easy complaints about the program failures, and the schools' limitations in the face of severe social problems, and the facile celebration of new twists on old pedagogic turns. We need to identify the goals that schools can be expected to meet, and the services for which they can be held accountable, as well as the ways -- limited, to be sure, but nonetheless real -- that their effective delivery contributes to the overall promise of social improvement. That effort represents the Jewish interest in public education. And while no one group, Jewish or other, can be responsible for making the public schools all they can be, it is in the Jewish interest to give them strong, loving and critical support.

*If the Jewish community feels that private schools are important for its overall well-being, then their support should not rest solely upon those who choose to send their children to them. Rather, it should be an obligation of the whole community -- neither of parents alone nor of the state.

NOTES

1. The Condition of Education: 1979 Edition. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, 1979.

2. For some, change itself is a synonym for deterioration: "[T] here are a lot of adults, school people and community people, who have memories of how the schools used to be, and who think that the only way the schools can be successful is where they are like what they remember. Adult nostalgia frequently stands in the way -- almost as though those adults won't let the present kids be successful." "An Interview with Frank J. Macchiarola," Social Policy, (May/June, 1979), p. 32.

3. For example, a report of the Nationwide Assessment of Educational Progress described significant improvements in the writing skills of Black children and others from low-income urban areas (The New York Times, January 16, 1981, p. 21). And an analysis of NAEP data for the past ten years in the Southeast shows broad gains in reading, mathematics and science, suggesting that school desegregation and effective early intervention programs may have causal effects (Phi Delta Kappa, January 1981, pp. 332-335).

4. The most succinct summary of these reports is to be found in R. Edmonds, "Some Schools Work and More Can," Social Policy (March/April, 1979), pp. 28-32.

5. G. Weber, Inner-City Children Can Be Taught to Read. Council for Basic Education, 1971.

6. School Factors Influencing Reading Achievement. Office of Education Program Review. New York State Education Department, 1974.

7. J.V. Madden, D.R. Lawson, and D. Sweet, School Effectiveness Study. Sacramento, Calif.: State Education Department, 1976.

8. Research Evaluation and Assessment Services of the Michigan Department of Education, Report of the 1974-75 Michigan Cost Effectiveness Study. Lansing: Capital Publications, 1976.

9. M.H. Kean, What Works in Reading? Philadelphia, Pa.: The School District, 1979.

10. Tommy N. Tomlinson, "The Troubled Years: An Interpretive Analysis of Public Schooling since 1950," Phi Delta Kappa (January, 1981), p. 376.

11. J.E. Coons and A.D. Sugarman, Education by Choice. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978.

12. The New York Times, November 17, 1980, p. A23.

13. The power of the "lure" is, of course, a matter of conjecture. The presently proposed $500 credit annually per student would probably not draw off too many families; but the expansion of other such programs (supra, p. 8 note 2) suggests that the size of the credit and the numbers availing themselves of it are likely to

grow. In addition, state and local governments could decide to offer their own tax credits. As Albert Shanker said, "If the Federal government gives $500, and the state government $500, I wouldn't be surprised if the City of New York gives $1,000. The cost of educating a child in the public schools is $3,000 a year. Koch'd save half of that. Where else can he save that kind of money?" (New York Teacher: UFT Bulletin, February 8, 1981, p. 1A.)

14. The New York Times, Jan. 18, 1981, p. A22.

15. A General Accounting Office study (1980), The Revenue Sharing Act's 1976 Amendment: Little Effect on Improving Administration and Enforcement of Non-discrimination Provisions, found that the Treasury Department had failed to implement the anit-discrimination procedures of the General Revenue Sharing Program.

16. The New York Times, February 18, 1981, p. A26.

17. Statements made in April 1962, cited in AJC and School Integration Highlights, 1972.

18. Bilingual Education, November 2, 1979.

19. J.C. Park, "Preachers, Politics, and Public Education: A Review of Right-Wing Pressures Against Public Schooling in America," Phi Delta Kappa (May, 1980), p. 611.

20. A useful summary is "Church-State Separation: Recent Trends and Developments," ADL Domestic Report: Law (Winter, 1980), p. 9.

21. Minnesota Civil Liberties Union v. Roemer.

22. Committee for Public Education and Religious Liberty v. Nyquist.

23. Public Funds for Public Schools of New Jersey v. Byrne.

24. Ring v. Grand Forks School District.

25. Stone v. Graham.

26. Florey v. Sioux Falls School District 49-5.

27. Stein v. Fairfax County School Board.

28. Congressional Record, July 11, 1979, H5706.

29. "Tolerating Religious Intolerance," The New York Times, December 6, 1980, p. A26.

30. Albert Shanker, president of the American Federation of Teachers, in a recent column, argued that one ought to be able to be against tuition tax credits without being subject to the charge of being anti-Catholic (or anti-Semitic, given the

number of Jewish parochial schools). Their enactment, he asserts, would deprive the public schools of two key resources -- funds and parental support. ("A New Low in Debate Over Tax Credits," The New York Times, January 18, 1981, p. E9.)

31. The New York Times, January 24, 1981, p. 25.

32. Irving M. Levine, Ethnicity and American Education, Working Paper Series No. 11 (May, 1971), Institute on Pluralism and Group Identity, The American Jewish Committee, p. 28.

COMMENTS

Perry Davis:

The Encyclopedia Judaica (Vol. 6, p. 385) notes that at the end of the second century B.C.E., Simeon ben Shetah, brother of Queen Salome Alexandra and president of the Sanhedrin, "inaugurated the first known system of community supported public education." Implied in this system was the notion of compulsory school attendance.

Throughout Jewish history, other elements of the role of education in society became evident. These include the concept of lifelong education, the notion of the Synagogue as study hall first and foremost, and even a reference that suggests maximum class size (25 students). Despite these sources, one is hard pressed to make a leap of educational faith extending the tradition of learning into the realm of secular or liberal arts education. If the Jewish people love to learn, it is textually obvious that what they love to learn is the Torah. Psalm 111, verse 10 says, "The essence of knowledge is fear of the Lord." This is refined by the adage "Torah study above all else" (Talmud torah k'neged kulam).

This particularistic position is strongly held by many Jews today. The harsh glare of contemporary American Jewish demographics proves our point. Alan Gartner cites Sidney Goldstein's finding on intermarriage as a footnote. But the fact that four to five out of ten Jewish marriages performed in the United States now involve non-Jewish partners is hardly a footnote, except perhaps to the grandchildren of these same marriages who will relegate their Jewish heritage to the same status.

I, therefore, believe that there can be three essential Jewish reactions to the role of public education in America in the 1980s. The first, that taken by Alan Gartner, argues a traditional liberal position. Public education is lionized but yeshiva education is disdained. Those of us who choose the yeshiva route presumably do not "give the child ... a cross-section of what society is all about" and the "opportunity to work within the real world." Is the converse true? Does the public-school route preclude an opportunity to work within the "Jewish world"?

The second dichotomous position not only supports yeshiva education for Jewish children but ridicules and demeans the role played by public education and its contributions to a just and pluralistic society. The potential ruination of public schools -- as a result of vouchers or tax credits -- is of no real concern to those holding this position.

I must argue for the acknowledgment of a third position. This stand makes

central the imperative of Jewish survival and growth in America. As a result, it acknowledges the primacy and necessity of yeshiva education for Jewish children as the answer to the dangers of assimilation. At the same time, it unashamedly supports a strong public education system as a basic prerequisite of a good, safe and just society. As such, this position can be held with pride by American Jews.

Chester E. Finn, Jr.:

There is one large blind spot in Alan Gartner's otherwise perceptive paper: its somewhat smug rejection of non-governmental education as something inherently inimical to the well-being of public education and, by extension, of the Jewish community. One unfortunate result of this attitude is a cursory and not very illuminating attack on proposals to assist families who choose to send their children to non-public schools in bearing the costs of their preferred form of education.

An "open, pluralistic society, where variety is welcomed, conformity spurned and individuality recognized and cherished" has two quite distinct educational manifestations.

The first, of course, is a sound public school system for all children and families who wish to avail themselves of it. A free public education is the right of every American child, without regard to race, religion, economic condition or other distinctions.

But it is precisely because we prize an open, pluralistic society that we dare not let anything so important as the education of the young become a government monopoly. The child is not the creature of the state, and the parent bears the primary responsibility for determining the kind of education that will best meet the needs of the youngster and the aspirations of the family.

Nine times out of ten, that means public schooling. But what of the child whose parents favor education that is not supplied by a government agency? Ought our public policies be oblivious to their rights, their educational preferences, and their appraisal of the child's needs?

It is not sufficient to "allow" them to opt for non-governmental schooling if they can afford it. If educational choice is a parental right, as I believe it must be, then it is a denial of rights to confine it to the wealthy -- to those who can afford to pay private school tuitions or to buy a home in a community with uncommonly good public schools.

Allowing the rich to exercise such choices is not a prescription for a pluralistic society. Hence the second essential criterion of our commitment to pluralism is our willingness to create such choices for those whose private resources are insufficient.

It is disingenuous to conclude, as Professor Gartner does with respect to Jewish private education, that support should come from the community. Many religious, ethnic and other "communities" do operate private schools, sometimes just for members of those communities but often for all who favor the distinctive kinds

of education valued by those communities. (The Roman Catholic schools of California, for example, have a higher percentage of Black and Hispanic students than do the public schools of California, though many of the youngsters who attend them are not Catholic.) But there is no reason to suppose that the religious (or other private) community must bear the full financial burden of maintaining these schools, any more than they bear the full financial burden of the hospitals, nursing homes, family counseling services and orphanages that they also operate. It is unreasonable and irrational to suppose that Medicare and Medicaid should underwrite the costs of many patients in Jewish (and Catholic, and Protestant) hopitals, but that no one who attends a non-government school has any claim upon government for assistance with the costs of attendance. I would note in passing that we also take it for granted that the Federal Government, and most state governments, will -- and should -- continue to assist college students in paying the tuitions levied by private colleges and universities, including those operated by religious groups. Pluralism, diversity and choice are essential principles underlying our public policies toward post-secondary education. Why create a double standard that regards non-public primary and secondary education as an aberration, as something undeserving of government assistance?

There is a risk, not well resisted in Professor Gartner's paper, of confusing principles with mechanisms. The essential question of principle is whether sound public policy ought to enhance the ability of parents to select the education that they favor for their children, or whether the first twelve grades of schooling are properly a state monopoly. There are many different means that could be devised to foster educational choice, and it is a grave mistake to allow one's view of a particular program or mechanism to color one's response to the basic question.

Tuition tax credits are the best known but certainly not the only means by which government policy could facilitate educational pluralism. If, for example, one believes that only "needy" families should be assisted, one might favor grants or scholarships to those without sufficient means of their own. Subsidized or unsubsidized loans are another approach. Tax-sheltered savings, akin to retirement accounts, might be yet another. For that matter, tuition tax credits can be contoured to any given set of policy objectives. An income ceiling on the credit would keep wealthy families from claiming it. Refundability would make it more useful to low income families. The amounts could vary, depending on family circumstances or school costs. A larger credit could be given to the parents of a handicapped child, and so forth. There is no limit to inventiveness with respect to specific provisions.

But I believe there is an essential distinction to be drawn between policies designed to aid those relatively few families who prefer private schools, and policies intended to transform all of education into an essentially "private" system. That is why I object strenuously to Professor Gartner's lumping of tuition tax credits with vouchers.

There is much to be said for the idea of vouchers, and it deserves more thoughtful treatment than can be provided in this brief note. But it is also the fact that a pure form of educational vouchers is tantamount to doing away with public schools as we know them. Whether one thinks that that is a good idea or a terrible notion, one should not confuse it with efforts to maintain private education

alongside public education, any more than one should confuse sustaining private colleges with wiping out state universities, or assisting private hospitals with the abolition of a municipal health care delivery system.

Pluraiism in education does not mean that all schools should be private. But it does mean that as long as some families favor non-government schooling, our public policies should be carefully geared in order to insure that they are not obliged to send their children to government schools just because they cannot afford the alternative.

Frank Goldsmith:

Unfortunately, Alan Gartner's Task Force paper seems to ignore the unhappy fact that there is certainly some difference of feeling in the Jewish community over the entire question of tax credits and tax vouchers as a means of funding private and parochial elementary and secondary education. On the one hand, there is a Jewish concern over the health and growth of Jewish day schools, and many Jews sharing this concern feel that tax credits or vouchers will help to strengthen Jewish education and therefore Jewish identification and preservation. On the other hand, I suggest there is a stronger Jewish concern over the need for maintaining the Constitutional guarantees of separation of church and state, as expressed by Dr. Gartner, and the direct threat to these guarantees posed by any adoption of tax credits or tax vouchers.

Although the government-derived direct and indirect financial aid represented by tax vouchers and credit may be very tempting to American Jews who are deeply worried about the health and preservation of Judaism and therefore about the health of Jewish parochial schools, I suggest that this is a very shortsighted point of view. The fact remains that, historically, Judaism and the right of Jews to live in peace and tranquility have been constantly threatened when two institutional forces have become consolidated -- the forces of religion and the forces of the state. Their combined tyranny have bred nothing but misery and heartache for Jews throughout the ages.

It is for this reason that we, as American Jews and as members of the American Jewish Committee, have fought so hard to support the doctrine of separation of church and state which the writers of our Constitution so wisely established as a means of protecting religious minorities, such as Jews, in the American democracy they were founding.

To ignore the fact that the use of government-collected taxes to finance religious institutions such as parochial schools will lead to government influence upon, interference with, and control of religious practices to the detriment of all religious minorities in this country (including Jews) is to ignore the history of our Western civilization, and especially of how we as Jews have fared in that civilization.

The further historical fact is that despite all, Jews and Judaism have survived and flourished throughout the ages, without the need to depend upon the state for

financial support for our religious and educational institutions. Certainly, we as American Jews should not now break with this tradition of independence and self-sufficiency.

Charles E. Silberman:

My reservations about the Alan Gartner paper have less to do with what he said than with what he has left unsaid. It seems to me that the paper fails to convey the terrible complexity of the issues discussed and the difficult, often painful, dilemmas that parents, policy makers, and ordinary citizens face.

Let me give a few examples:

1. The paper fails to consider the implications of the Reagan victory and of the new Federal budget the Reagan Administration has put before the Congress. To be sure, it is too soon to know whether the Reagan victory represents a watershed in American politics or just a temporary halt to the long-term growth of the welfare state. At the moment, however, the mood is one of retrenchment, in both taxes and government spending.

In the absence of any evidence that the mood will change, therefore, it is ingenuous to conclude the discussion of the financing of public education on an optimistic note. "Those engaged in the search for alternatives to a property-tax base for funding education," Alan Gartner writes, "would do well to concentrate on the overall level of support and on equalization at the same time." It may also be that the Messiah will come tomorrow. It would be a mistake to count on either outcome, however. If the Mashiach does not come and the current pressures to reduce both income and property tax rates continue, we are likely to see a major erosion of financial support for public education and a reversal of the movement toward equalization of spending among school districts.

2. The question of tax credits for private education is more complex than the paper suggests; nor is the Jewish interest as simple or clear-cut as Alan Gartner implies. In fact, two Jewish interests are in conflict here.

I quite agree with Professor Gartner that American Jews have a strong interest in the continued viability of the public schools. Indeed, I wish he had elaborated on the reasons why a strong public school system is in the Jewish interest; it seems to me that the case for public education is asserted, rather than explained. But it is also true that there is a strong Jewish interest in the growth and viability of Jewish day schools -- an interest to which Professor Gartner gives insufficient attention. Apart from the traditional Jewish emphasis on Torah lishmah (learning for its own sake), research on Jewish identification suggests, not surprisingly, that there is a strong positive correlation between the intensity of a person's Jewish education and the intensity of his or her later Jewish identification.

The result is a conflict between two aspects of our existence: American Jews have a strong interest in the health of the public schools, but American Judaism has a strong interest in the health of Jewish parochial schools. What is good for the

Jews, that is to say -- in this case, domestic tranquility and fuller integration into American society -- is not necessarily best for Judaism. The more acculturated American Jews become, in fact, the more important formal Jewish education becomes as an instrument of Jewish survival.

There is no easy way to resolve this tension; I find myself pulled in opposite directions, and most of the people I know find themselves in the same situation. Whatever position one takes, therefore, one ought to acknowledge the conflicts and ambiguities that are involved. Instead, it seems to me, the paper strains to make its case persuasive.

It is disingenuous, for example, to suggest that public support would be "harmful to the day schools themselves," because public support might carry with it state requirements for teacher certification, minimum curricula, and compulsory attendance. Such regulations would be more likely to improve the quality of day-school education than to cause harm.

It comes with ill grace, moreover, for the American Jewish Committee to oppose tax credits because they are "regressive in impact." The principal Jewish support for tax credits for parochial education, after all, comes from Orthodox groups which represent predominantly working-class and lower-middle-class constituencies.

In the last analysis, Professor Gartner's all-out opposition to any public support for parochial education rests on a questionable assumption: that support for education is a zero-sum gain, in which support for parochial education will automatically and necessarily reduce support for public schools by the same amount. The assumption is simply stated as "likely," without any evidence being offered one way or another.

In my judgment, the reverse may be closer to the mark. All-out opposition to any support for non-public education may backfire, i.e., we may intensify opposition to public-school budgets on the part of those Americans -- particularly working-class and lower-middle-class Catholics and evangelical Protestants -- who send their children to parochial or religiously oriented private schools. Many of these people feel bypassed or displaced by recent changes in American society. Failure to respond to that sense of displacement -- in this instance, failure to provide at least modest support for non-public education, and thus to recognize the legitimacy of these groups' claims -- may carry a heavy price in social animus, and a consequent determination to cut public school budgets to the bone. Contrariwise, meeting that animus by providing limited tax credits may actually increase the funds available for the support of public schools.

3. There is an anachronistic quality to the discussion of race and of school integration. To say of school integration that the relevant questions "relate not to issues of 'whether' but of 'how' " and then to ignore the demographic realities of metropolitan school systems, not to mention the phenomenon of white and middle-class flight from the public schools, is to condemn the paper to irrelevance. In most big-city school systems, such as those of New York, Washington, Chicago, Atlanta, Philadelphia, and Los Angeles, there simply are not enough white Anglo students left to permit more than token reductions in racial isolation.

And even if racial isolation could be reduced, would the consequences be the ones Alan Gartner assumes? Can we still assume that intergroup tensions will be reduced, that is to say, if white and Black children sit together in the same classrooms? In the present racial climate, the reverse may (and does) occur, i.e., integration may exacerbate, rather than relieve, intergroup tensions and strengthen negative stereotypes that whites and Blacks have of one another.

Lest I be misunderstood, let me emphasize that I am not urging opposition to the integration of public schools. I am simply asking that the discussion of integration reflect the ugly realities of the world we inhabit, and that we pay attention to the costs of integration -- to Black and Hispanic, as well as white Anglo children -- as well as to their benefits. If the public schools are to be saved, we will have to go beyond the wistful optimism and catch phrases of the 1950s and 1960s.

4. If we are to have any hope of achieving the domestic tranquility for which the Union was established, the public schools will have to do an incomparably better job than they are now doing of educating youngsters from Black, Hispanic, and lower-class white homes. Success is possible; as Alan Gartner demonstrates, we now have a significant body of evidence indicating that public schools in slum and ghetto neighborhoods can bring their students to at least a minimum level of competence. (He has performed a valuable service in marshalling the evidence on this point.)

Unfortunately, Professor Gartner stops short of discussing the changes that are needed if schools are to succeed, and he does not indicate the strategies by which these changes may be brought about. There is no panacea -- no easy way to solve the 150-year-old problem of how to educate children from minority-group homes. To argue that the public schools can educate all children is not to suggest that they will; nor is it to imply that success will, or can, come easily. To the contrary, massive institutional and attitudinal changes are needed if the schools are to bring all their students to a minimum level of competence. My own research in this area, for example, pointed to the public school principal as the key to success; when the principals responsible for success retired or left for other jobs, their schools generally reverted to their prior state of failure.

For public schools to succeed, therefore, school systems will have to change the criteria by which principals are selected and evaluated. For this to happen, the criteria by which school superintendents are selected and evaluated will also have to be changed -- and that, in turn, means changing the criteria by which school board members are selected. None of these changes is likely to come about without a transformation of public attitudes about education.

Carol H. Stix:

Professor Gartner has provided a valuable service through his scholarly organization and analysis of the issues facing public education in the 1980s. If public education is to be preserved and improved, public support for it must be rebuilt.

To do this, stress must be placed on the fact that the public schools are not, nor were they created to be, merely a service to attending children and their parents. The schools are called "public" because they are meant to serve the needs of a self-governing and highly complex society.

The public schools, in fact, are the only institution with the capacity to make the dream of equality of opportunity a reality; the only institution with a proven history of welcoming newcomers and educating them to be law-abiding and self-supporting.

If, by neglect or unwise policy decisions, we destroy the public schools, we will have a nation divided into two classes; those able to contribute and those who are either dependent or destructive.

Every proposal affecting the schools should be addressed to the public at large, and every policy evaluated according to its long-term impact on the quality of public education.